



MIKE JOHNSTON  
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Nov. 7, 2025

1437 Bannock Street  
Room 451  
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Council President Sandoval, Pro-Tem Romero Campbell, and Honorable Members of Denver City Council:

The 2026 budget process has been one of the most challenging our city has faced. Our goals this year were tough, but necessary: deliver government that functions better and costs less by rightsizing our budget, modernizing and digitizing services to make them easier for customers and employees, and reducing regulatory burdens that were impeding smooth city operations. Throughout this process, we were focused on protecting residents' core services, staying committed to long-term city priorities, and reducing impacts on our employees. In doing so, we were able to balance the budget while limiting layoffs to 1% of employees and without major changes in services.

I am accepting all 10 budget amendments, and I'm pleased that, with these amendments, we have delivered a final 2026 budget for the City and County of Denver.

This budget has grown stronger since we began this process in April thanks to months of collaboration between city agencies, City Council members, and advocates across the city. City Council in particular has shaped this budget in significant ways. Of the 29 budget priorities that Council shared in June, 25 of them are reflected in this final document. 11 more proposals from Council were incorporated in October and now all ten of the Council's requested amendments that were approved are accepted. At a time when reduced tax revenues are forcing difficult choices across the city, we have crafted a budget that meets the moment and keeps Denver moving forward.

Although I am proud of the work that went into this budget, I am concerned that some of the passed amendments dip further into the city's reserve and contingency funds before we even start 2026. Because these changes require funding beyond the coming year, which contingency cannot provide, we will have to find different funding sources to sustain them in 2027. I am committed to working with Council to address these shortfalls in the coming budget year and to rebuild our reserves to our 15% goal over the next few budget cycles.

Over months of work, this Council and agencies across the city have worked tirelessly to deliver a budget that places Denver back on stable financial footing in the midst of difficult economic times. I remain grateful for your partnership and look forward to continuing to work together to serve the city we all love.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Johnston".

Mike Johnston  
Mayor